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8 U.S. CONGRESSMEN WELCOMED IN HANOI

HANOI, Vietnam (AP) — Eight U.S. congressmen, the largest such group to visit this Communist capital since the late 1950s, flew into Hanoi today and were welcomed by Vietnamese officials who said the mission "will open up a new stage in relations between our two countries."

Rep. G. V. "Sonny" Montgomery, D-Miss., the leader of the delegation, said the trip could help smooth out U.S.-Vietnamese relations.

"We cannot make policy or negotiate but we come with open minds and we will take back what we learn to the president and the Congress," Montgomery told Phan Hien, Vietnam's vice foreign minister.

HIEN SAID THE Communist government's premier, Pham Van Dong, considered the trip "very important" and would meet with the congressmen in Hanoi.

The delegation flew from Manila, the Philippines, and landed at Hanoi's Noi Bai Airport, which is guarded by camouflaged anti-aircraft guns.

The delegation will also visit Ho Chi Minh City, formerly Saigon, and Vientiane, the Laotian capital. The congressmen will be the first official U.S. group to visit the former South Vietnamese capital since it fell to Communist forces in April 1975.

Montgomery said he believes the Vietnamese are willing to normalize relations with the United States.

"All indications from the Vietnamese are go," he said in an interview last night.

Montgomery, who favors trade and other ties with the former wartime opponent, said the seven other congressmen he selected for the trip were chosen because they have been opposed to normalization of relations, and their conversion might carry weight in Congress.

MONTGOMERY SAID HE hoped to get new information on Americans missing in action in the Vietnam War and to learn something about Vietnam's relations with China, Cambodia and the Soviet Union.

About 2,500 Americans are still listed as missing in action in Indochina or dead without recovery of their remains, a large percentage in Vietnam. The Vietnamese refusal or inability to turn over more American remains or information on the missing has been a major barrier to normalization of relations between the two governments.

Montgomery said he was confident the Vietnamese had made an effort in the past 18 months to search for and identify remains of Americans, but he said the Laotians had done little.

Others making the trip are Reps. George E. Danielson, D-Calif., Antonio Borja Won Pat, D-Guam, John P. Murtha, D-Pa., Sam B. Hall, D-Texas, Ike N. Skelton, D-Mo., James Broyhill, R-N.C., and W. Henson Moore, R-La.